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INAUGURAL NAYI-OMAHA EVENT SHOWS PATHWAY TO CAREERS IN AGRICULTURE FOR OMAHA AREA STUDENTS

OMAHA – Many Omaha area high school students may not see themselves as having a career in the agriculture sector. However, for the approximately 150 students who attended Friday's Nebraska Agricultural Youth Institute (NAYI)-Omaha event, they were able to see that the possibilities are endless.

"After today I definitely have a new outlook on the ag industry and how it could be a good career for me," said Dan Cronin, a student at Bennington High School. "Coming from somewhat of an ag background, I definitely have an interest in the ag industry. It could be a good career for just about anybody."

The day-long event, held at the CenturyLink Center in conjunction with AKSARBEN Stock Show and Rodeo, is designed to give students the opportunity to learn about non-traditional careers in the agriculture sector and the availability of those jobs in the Omaha area. NAYI-Omaha was coordinated by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) in partnership with the AKSARBEN Foundation and the Greater Omaha Area Chamber of Commerce.

"We've heard the term 'brain drain' too many times in recent years," NDA Director Greg Ibach said. "We feel if we can demonstrate to youth of all different backgrounds that they can have a successful and satisfying career in agribusiness, then many of them will decide to stay right here in Nebraska."

NAYI-Omaha was developed following work of the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce over the past year and a half to identify economic strengths within the Omaha region. The result of that effort is the Greater Omaha Economic Partnership Strategy, unveiled at the Governor's Ag Conference in March. The goal of the strategy is to position Omaha as a global leader for value-added agricultural companies.

A component of the strategy is to train and educate a workforce that can meet the growing needs of the agribusiness industry. NDA participated in the task force that developed the strategy.

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“Sometimes students pigeonhole agriculture, thinking it’s only about producing crops or livestock,” said Omaha Bryan teacher Krystal Kolb, who brought several students to the NAYI-Omaha event. “But technology, industry and business have become so very important to agriculture that almost any area of study can be incorporated in an ag-related career.”

Lindsey Parks, a student at Omaha Bryan said she has had an interest in teaching and after joining FFA and attending NAYI-Omaha she is now considering a career as an agricultural teacher. Another Omaha Bryan student, Luis Alcaraz Duvon, said the event has opened his eyes to possible careers in agriculture in engineering or finance.

For the past 44 years, NDA has coordinated a NAYI summer event that targets students who typically already have a keen interest in a career in agriculture. Ibach said that the Omaha event enables the department to expand its youth outreach efforts into urban areas.

Additional information about NAYI along with photos for the NAYI Omaha event can be found on the Nebraska Agricultural Youth Institute Facebook page.

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